



The Holy See

MASS WITH THE COMMUNITIES FROM FOUR ROMAN PARISHES:

St Maximilian Kolbe

St Patrick

St Margaret Mary Alacoque

St Mary Mediatrix

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Paul VI Audience Hall

Saturday, 20 March 2004

1. "Rejoice..." (*Entrance Antiphon*; cf. Is 66: 10-11). The invitation to rejoice that rang out at the beginning of the Eucharistic celebration clearly expresses the climate of today's liturgy. We have reached the Fourth Sunday of Lent, traditionally known as *Laetare* Sunday, and we are already given a foretaste of the spiritual joy of Easter. The exhortation to rejoice becomes even more heartfelt and demanding when we listen to the Gospel that presents to us once again the moving Parable "of the Prodigal Son" (cf. Lk 15: 1-3, 11-32). In the father who embraces his son who was "lost", we contemplate the face of the good and merciful Lord, ever ready to offer to all humankind his forgiveness, a source of serenity and peace. 2. Let us open our hearts to this consoling word of salvation, dear brothers and sisters of the Parishes of St Maximilian Kolbe in Via Prenestina, St Patrick, St Margaret Mary Alacoque and St Mary Mediatrix! I welcome you all with affection. I greet the Cardinal Vicar and thank him for his courteous words expressing the sentiments of all those present. I greet the Archbishop Vicegerent and your zealous parish priests: Fr Duilio Colantoni, Fr. Arnaldo D'Innocenzo, Fr Salvatore Uras and Fr Tomasz Porzycki of the Society of Christ for Polish emigrants. I extend my greeting to the priests and deacons who work with them, to the men and women religious established in some of your parishes, especially the Monfortian Fathers, the Sisters of St Paul of Chartres and the Sisters Reparatrix of the Sacred Heart. I embrace with affection all of you present here, with a special thought for the parish council members, the catechists, those who belong to the various parish groups and the children who attend catechism classes. Your parishes, located in the eastern suburbs of Rome, are called to constant evangelization. I congratulate all those who, despite the precarious state of the structures, are diligently following the courses in Christian formation and catechesis and are dedicated to liturgical service and charity to their needy brothers and sisters, as well as to the preparation of young people for marriage and family life. 3. The presence of the parish community of St Margaret Mary Alacoque, in whose territory is located [the University of] Tor Vergata, brings us back in spirit to the unforgettable meeting of young people for the World

Youth Day in the Year 2000. The Cross of the Holy Year of the Redemption stood out at that memorable event. Dear young people, make the Cross your essential reference point. Draw from the crucified and risen Christ the courage to evangelize our world so fraught by divisions, hatred, wars, terrorism, but rich in many human and spiritual resources. I am expecting many of you to come to St Peter's Square on Thursday, 1 April, together with your peers from Rome and Lazio. There we will prepare for the World Youth Day which will be celebrated this year in various dioceses on Palm Sunday.⁴ I invite you all to look at the Cross, dear brothers and sisters who have gathered this evening for Holy Mass. Be open and hospitable parish communities. Numerous Latin American and Polish faithful live among you. May these brothers and sisters of ours feel loved as Christ loved and served every man and every woman to the point of giving up his life. It is this concrete witness of faith that also moves the hearts of the so-called "fallen away".⁵ "*If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come*" (II Cor 5: 17). Dear brothers and sisters, may this knowledge, recalled by the Apostle in the Second Reading, guide you as you journey on! Live in Christ as new creatures. An irrepressible hymn of praise and thanksgiving will then burst from your hearts to the One who redeemed us with his sacrifice on the Cross. May Mary, who stood weeping on Calvary, obtain for you the gift of true conversion, a prelude to the joy without end promised to faithful disciples of her divine Son. Amen!

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